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Statement submitted by Foundation for Human Horizon, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Promoting collective mindfulness within Member States and stakeholders is key to successful transition of the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals.

Collective mindfulness has five dimensions, which includes reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience and deference to expertise. Member States should be preoccupied with all failures, especially small ones. Small things that go wrong are often early warning signals of deepening trouble and give insight into the health of the whole system. We have a tendency to ignore or overlook our failures (which suggest we are not competent) and focus on our successes (which suggest we are competent). Reluctance to simplify refers to the Member States' expectations to help States simplify the Millennium Development Goals and steer States away from disconfirming evidence (i.e. we see what we expect to see, we see what we have labels to see, and we see what we have skills to manage). As collective mindfulness efforts we need to create more varied and differentiated expectations in order to better understand what we face.

Our goal is requisite variety. Sensitivity to operations includes members to speak up (knowledge lies between heads); encourage others to speak up and ask questions; check for comprehension; acknowledge what you hear; be aware of how you react to pressure; tell others, verbalize your plans; reduce pressure by changing importance, demands and abilities; and over learn new routines.

Stakeholders need to adopt attitude of wisdom, which includes the more you know, more you don't know; avoid overconfidence, over caution, near miss-danger in guise of safety, safety in guise of danger. Stakeholders also need to practise respectful interaction, which means provide trustworthy reports; trust the reports of partners; resolve differences while maintaining self-respect. The last dimension is of deference to expertise. Stakeholders need to shift decisions away from formal authority toward expertise and experience; they need to have flexible decision making structures; their networks do not have a fixed central player who can mistakenly assume that she/he knows everything. Decision making migrates to experts at all levels of the hierarchy during high tempo times.

Stakeholders need to work together in ways that combine technical expertise and democratic representation. Global problem-solving networks for sustainable development — in energy, food, urbanization, climate resilience, and other sectors — will therefore become crucial new institutions in the years ahead. New social media and information technology have given the world an unprecedented opportunity for inclusive, global-scale problem solving around the main sustainable development challenges. Scientists, technologists, civil society activists and others are increasingly turning to online networks for collaboration, crowdsourcing, group problem solving, and open-source solutions such as for software and applications.